

# **Provider and Staff Version**

## **No Wrong Door**

NH Balancing Incentive Program  
*Creating a more responsive and integrated system  
for accessing community based long-term care*

Revised November 2013

### **Introduction**

The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has long been committed to the provision of quality services in community settings. To further promote and expand community based long-term care supports and services (LTSS), New Hampshire applied for and was awarded a federal Balancing Incentive Program (BIP) grant through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

BIP provides financial incentives to states to offer community LTSS as an alternative to institutional care. CMS hopes that states will rebalance public funding for long-term care to better support options that allow individuals to live in communities of their choice, among friends and family, with control over their own lives and futures.<sup>1</sup>

Through the BIP grant New Hampshire is seeking to achieve improvements in three interrelated areas: 1) increasing the public's awareness of community based service options as the preferred first choice for long-term care – rather than institutions; 2) improving and streamlining the application, assessment, and eligibility coordination processes for LTSS; and 3) improving the availability of community LTSS, with a focus on addressing related issues (including workforce, housing, transportation and others) and coordinating with Medicaid Managed Care Organizations.

This updated white paper outlines DHHS' working proposal for creating efficient and coordinated application, assessment, and eligibility determination processes for Medicaid funded community LTSS. The population BIP is designed for include all adults and children accessing LTSS, including elderly/adult, behavioral health, and developmental services systems.

### **No Wrong Door**

Currently, there is no standardized process for accessing community LTSS. Though they are all under the umbrella of DHHS and funded through common revenue sources (state dollars and federal Medicaid funds), New Hampshire's service systems have developed their own separate application and assessment processes. Applicants found ineligible by one system may, or may not, be referred to the program that can appropriately meet their needs. The current process is not only cumbersome – requiring individuals to make numerous appointments and to tell their story multiple times - it also increases the risk that those in need of support will experience unnecessary delays and crises.

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<sup>1</sup> Mission Analytics Group, The Balancing Incentive Program Implementation Manual (2011)

To remedy this situation, DHHS is working with stakeholders to inform a *No Wrong Door* application and assessment process for community LTSS that is responsive to the needs of the individual and is integrated across service systems. Developing a uniform screening and application process and a consistent approach to eligibility coordination will ensure that, from the very first inquiry about long-term care, individuals and families will have the information and the support they need to access the least restrictive and most appropriate home and community based services.

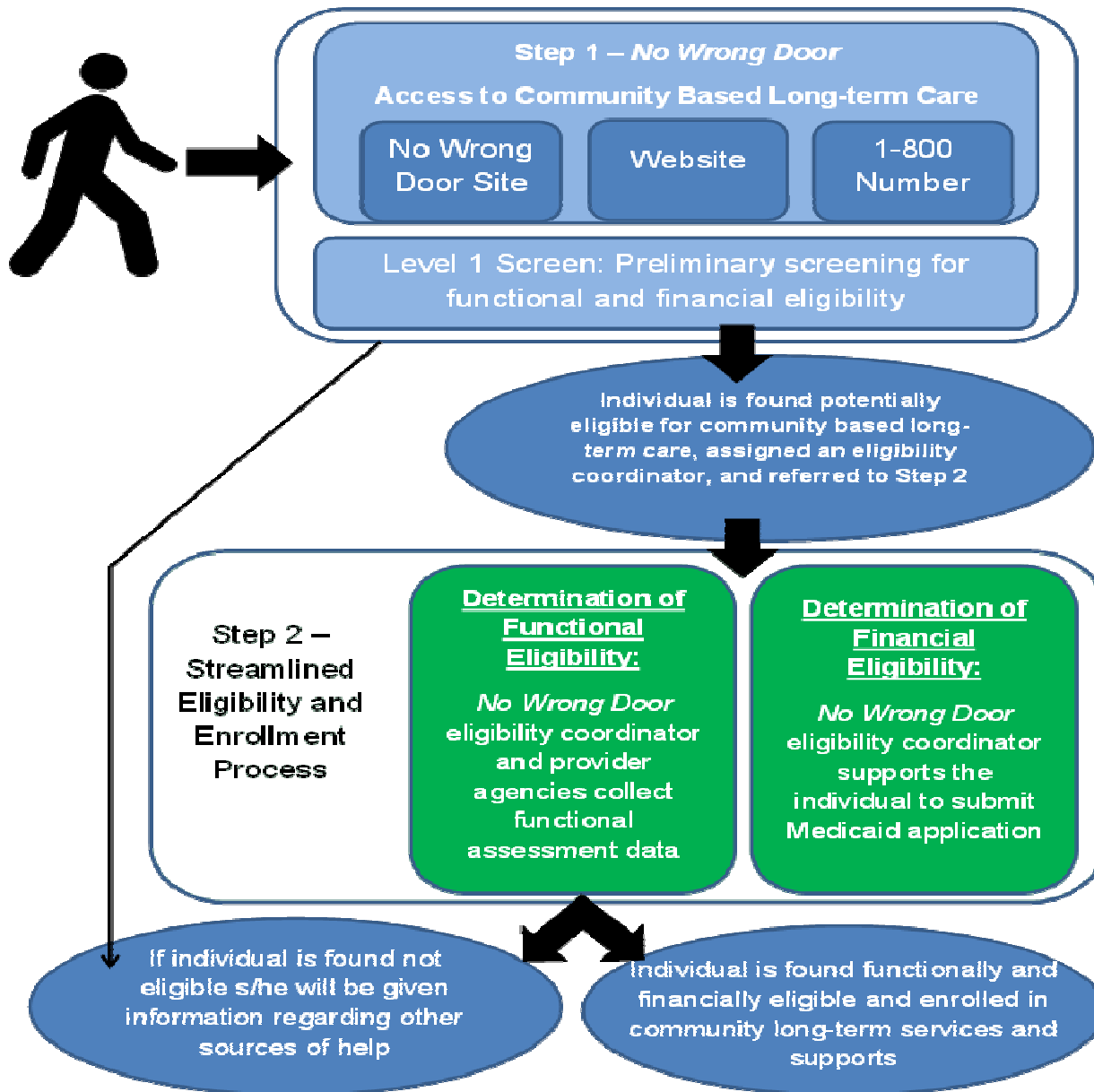
## **Creating a Standardized Screening and Application Process**

A primary goal for the Balancing Incentive Program is to create a single entry process that utilizes the same information, tools, and procedures for *all* individuals who are seeking LTSS. To move from a fragmented process to an application process that is coordinated and integrated across services systems, DHHS will develop and implement standardized policies and practices for the entire LTSS system. DHHS will establish a statewide network of accessible community locations where individuals and family members can go to inquire about LTSS, complete a preliminary screening, and be connected with someone who can provide support through the application process. In addition DHHS will establish web based and telephone access and support.

The first step in obtaining community long-term care in the *No Wrong Door* model will be an initial screening to assess whether an individual is likely to be financially and functionally eligible for Medicaid funded LTSS and to identify the service system that can best meet the person's long-term care needs. An individual or family member will be able to independently initiate the screening process by completing a simple online form at the DHHS website. *No Wrong Door* will provide a toll free number where individuals can get information about community options and talk with a staff person who will help them complete the screening process over the telephone. There will be trained staff at each ServiceLink Resource Centers who are familiar with and available to support individuals and families with this initial screening. Other DHHS program areas, designated LTSS provider agencies, and approved community partners throughout the state will serve as *No Wrong Door* partners, but the ServiceLinks will serve as the full service access point.

For all those who have been found potentially eligible for Medicaid community LTSS, there will be a standardized application process that will be used across the services systems. Through the BIP grant, current LTSS assessment instruments will be enhanced through trainings to increase awareness and application of BIP principles. These will be used in a uniform manner throughout the state to determine functional eligibility and to identify an individual's need for specific long-term supports, medical care, and other services. Our goal is to prevent the LTSS applicants from having to "tell their stories" multiple times.

(Note, individuals who, through the screening, are determined *not* to be financially eligible for Medicaid will still receive information about available community LTSS and help to personally connect with someone from the provider system most appropriate for meeting their needs.)



### The Role of the Eligibility Coordinator

All persons applying for Medicaid LTSS will be able to work with an eligibility coordinator, who can guide the individual through the financial and functional eligibility process and who can easily find out the status of the eligibility determination and next steps. This individual will continue to be available to the applicant throughout the eligibility process. Having one person to provide consistent guidance from the very beginning of the application process right up until the actual delivery of services will be critical to the success of *No Wrong Door*.

An applicant's eligibility coordinator will work in partnership with those service systems identified by the screening process as appropriate for meeting the individual's needs. This collaboration between the eligibility coordinator and community partners will help to ensure that each individual receives the full range of community supports available to meet the person's needs.

As the applicant's primary contact person, the eligibility coordinator will offer guidance as needed, trouble shoot if necessary, and provide follow up to ensure that the individual is able to successfully complete the application process and access the needed services in a timely manner.

The eligibility coordinator is responsible for making sure that those seeking community long-term supports and services understand each step of the application process and are aware of all documentation required to complete the applications for Medicaid and community LTSS. Armed with this information, many individuals (or family members helping apply for services) may be capable of independently navigating the application process and will need only minimal help from the eligibility coordinator. However, there are others who will require significant assistance. Having a standardized application process and support from an eligibility coordinator will make it easier and timelier for applicants who need services across systems to get appropriate care.

The eligibility coordinator's responsibilities include, but are not limited to the following:

- Provision of comprehensive information about LTSS options
- Referral to Enhanced Options Counseling for LTSS<sup>2</sup>
- Full explanation of the application process for Medicaid and for LTSS
- Overall management of the information and paperwork needed to determine financial and functional eligibility for LTSS
- Assistance, as needed, to schedule appointments for assessments
- Timely response to applicants' inquiries
- Regular updates to the individual and/or family on the status of applications and the next steps in the process
- Gathering and sharing necessary information and documentation to facilitate cross system and cross program access to LTSS
- Addressing any issues and barriers that may arise in the application and assessment process
- Facilitation of the individual's enrollment in the most appropriate, least restrictive community LTSS
- Managing the transition from eligibility coordination to case management

For all applicants, working with a knowledgeable eligibility coordinator who thoroughly understands all aspects of the application process will help reduce the sense of isolation and stress associated with trying to secure long-term care. Having one reliable, consistent person who is available to answer questions, make needed connections, and address problems is designed to ensure individuals and their families are not going through this alone. Finally, a streamlined and coordinated enrollment process should ensure timely eligibility and enrollment.

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<sup>2</sup> Options counseling is an interactive person-centered deliberative process where individuals are supported to make informed choices about LTSS based upon their personal preferences, strengths, and values.

## **Community Partners**

DHHS will work with our LTSS and other community partners who can help provide individuals and families information about community based options. Community partners may include DHHS Medicaid funded providers (area agencies, mental health centers, community long-term care programs), private health care professionals, hospital social services, senior centers, and city/town human resources and health departments.

Under the BIP grant, DHHS will be developing a plan to ensure that there is a statewide network of trained community partners. Training will include information about the benefits of putting in place the *No Wrong Door* application process. There are significant plusses not only for those who are in need of long-term care, but also for health care providers, local social services, and the community at large. Being able to help individuals connect with appropriate community long-term supports helps prevent unnecessary emergency room visits, stops the shuttling of individuals from one agency to the next, and provides much needed relief to caregiving families. Having streamlined access to home and community-based care also means that individuals and families have a better chance of averting the crises that often precede institutional placements.

DHHS will establish criteria for partnerships between the ServiceLink Resource Centers and community partners that will support the principles of NWD. All community partners will be offered training on eligibility processes and can easily find out the status of the eligibility determination and next steps. Community Partners will have access to *No Wrong Door* information and resources to effectively support individuals and families who are seeking community based LTSS.

## **Standardized Information and Training**

Standardized information and training will be provided to all eligibility coordinators and community partners. Training will include information on the toll free number, website and full service access points. In addition, information on standardized assessment and protocols and LTSS programs and options will be provided. A guide to the screening process will be created to help ensure there is a uniform approach for assisting individuals and families who are seeking community LTSS. A handbook will be developed for eligibility coordinators and will be available electronically across service systems. The handbook will lay out in detail the role and responsibilities of the eligibility coordinator in the application process. It will include pertinent information about each of the service systems providing community LTSS, including expected competencies for serving different populations. It also will have electronic links to application and assessment forms, relevant policies and procedures, and resources for community LTSS.

For all eligibility coordinators and full service access points, training will be offered on best practices for customer service, including active listening and interviewing skills and how to provide effective follow-up. As *No Wrong Door* moves forward, DHHS will work closely with its partners to identify and put in place any additional training or supports that may be needed.

Through the BIP grant, DHHS also will be developing informational resources for providers of community LTSS and for the general public. These will include a comprehensive *Handbook to Long Term Care Services* that will be available both electronically and in hard copy.

## **Creating a Robust IT Infrastructure**

The availability of easy electronic access is crucial to the *No Wrong Door* application process. Implementing a single entry process for community LTSS will require an IT system that is both user friendly and has an integrated approach to electronic filing. Processes will be designed to allow information to be easily shared across.

To do this, *No Wrong Door* proposes enhancing the IT capacity currently available through NH Easy and New HEIGHTS. NH Easy is the DHHS web-based tool for Medicaid screening and on-line application submission. New HEIGHTS is the eligibility determination system for DHHS financial assistance programs, Medicaid, Food Stamps and Child Care Services. New HEIGHTS also issues recipients benefits for the financial assistance and Food Stamp programs through its Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) and Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) processing capability.

A goal of DHHS is to make the preliminary screening (to determine potential eligibility for community LTSS) available online, hopefully through the NH Easy website. As stated earlier, individuals or family members may go online and independently answer the screening questions or they may work with a *No Wrong Door* eligibility coordinator who will help them to complete the online screening process. For those identified as potentially eligible for long-term care, DHHS will seek to expand NH Easy to offer on-line access to community LTSS applications across the elderly/adult, behavioral health, and developmental services systems. IT capability for both NH Easy and New HEIGHTS will be increased to allow data sharing and to track and monitor the application processes for determining both financial and functional eligibility.

Currently, each DHHS service system has created its own assessment instruments to determine an applicant's medical and/or functional eligibility for services. At present these assessments are not available in an automated format and must be processed manually. Automation of these assessments, potentially in NH Easy and New HEIGHTS, is a future goal for *No Wrong Door* and will help to significantly streamline the application process.

It should be noted, that with other pressing DHHS priorities, the proposed enhancements to NH Easy and New HEIGHTS are competing for limited resources. While enhancing IT capacity using these programs is the ultimate goal, in the short-term other automated solutions may need to be explored.

## **Moving from Concept to Implementation**

The updated plan presented in this white paper outlines the process for creating a streamlined and standardized application and assessment process for community LTSS. At each step along the path to implementing *No Wrong Door*, DHHS will continue to seek feedback and support from stakeholders, both within the Department and in the community. For example, as *No Wrong Door* works to develop a statewide network of eligibility coordinators, DHHS will look for guidance from those who are currently doing eligibility determination. These stakeholders will be asked to help develop uniform application tools, forms, and processes for determining financial and functional eligibility for community LTSS. Stakeholders also will be tapped to share their ideas for creating a toll-free number, website, and providing face-to-face assistance to those seeking community LTSS. An ongoing close collaborative partnership with all key stakeholders will be essential to establishing a more responsive and integrated system for accessing community based long-term care.